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HISTORY OF THE SITE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL AND FOLGER LIBRARIES

BY

DR. CHARLES O. PAULLIN

(Read before the Society March 19, 1936)

Looking eastward from the front steps of the House of Representatives wing of the national Capitol, one sees a large, grey, impressive building, the Library of Congress. Within its portals, tier after tier and deck upon deck, is a vast collection of books, one of the greatest in the world. There are often to be seen entering this building serious-looking persons carrying the green bag of Boston or the portfolio of the professor. These are the students and scholars who write books by means of other people's books. They are in search of the elusive thought that solaces, the elusive principle that guides—a noble occupation. But it is not with this building, nor its contents, nor its readers that I am concerned this evening, but with its site, a much more prosaic theme.

Eastward of the building is the Library of Congress Annex, now in course of erection, and northward of the Annex is the Folger Shakespeare Library. Since the three structures have similar uses and form a library unit, and their combined sites form a geographical unit, this paper will include also a history of the sites of the two newer structures. The combined site will be hereafter referred to for the sake of brevity as the "library site." It is bounded on the south by B Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, on the west by First Street, on the north by East Capitol Street, and on the east by Third Street. It lies in the southeast quarter of the city and adjoins the

Capitol grounds. It is part of a large triangle bounded by the Anacostia River, the Potomac River, and M Street. The main original drainage of the triangle was two streams, Tiber Creek, with its mouth in a bay of the Potomac River near the Monument grounds, and James Creek, with its mouth in the Anacostia River near the eastern boundary of the Army War College grounds. The library site, which is situated on an elevation first known as Jenkins's Hill or Heights, and later as Capitol Hill, drained southward and westward into James Creek. Incidentally, I may add that the principles of the naturalistic school of landscape architecture, now in vogue, suggest that the two valleys connecting near the Botanic Garden, with their water courses, should have been preserved as a natural park, and the public buildings should have been placed on the F Street ridge and the corresponding ridge south of the Mall. In 1790 the necessary land could have been purchased for one-third as many dollars as were recently expended for the Church of the Reformation on the site of the Library Annex.

That the aborigines tramped over the library site may be stated with assurance, for archaeologists have found the vestiges of an Indian village near Garfield Park, and the early explorers reported an Indian settlement on the Maryland side of the Anacostia River. Capt. John Smith in 1608 and Capt. Henry Fleet in 1632 were the first white men to sail up the Potomac as far as Little Falls. As they approached what is now the Army War College grounds, they must have observed the mouth of James Creek; and probably, following the line of the creek, their gaze rested momentarily on the wooded heights of Capitol Hill. They were navigating in Virginia waters, for it was not until 1633 that Maryland was carved out of Virginia and her southern boundary

line, the southern bank of the Potomac River, was fixed. It ran four miles westward of the library site, the first boundary line, public or private, in the region of Washington. In the 1660's private boundary lines and a considerable number of geographical names first make their appearance. The names found in the early patents often proved to be temporary and were in time succeeded by those with which we are now familiar. Of the early names the following may be mentioned: St. Thomas Bay, now the Anacostia River or Eastern Branch; Anacostine River, now the Potomac River; Tiber Bay; Tiber River, later Tiber Creek and still later Goose Creek; St. James Creek, later James Creek; and St. John's Creek, later Cabin John Creek or Run. Since the designation "Tiber Creek" preceded that of Goose Creek, the jibe of the poet Thomas Moore "And what was Goose Creek once is Tiber now" loses its point.

Because of ignorance of precise location, of imperfections in the surveys, and of the voiding of patents on failure to pay rent, the early grants frequently overlap. The patents designate by a name the lands they described, as well as by metes and bounds. Fronting on the Anacostia River and extending westward from the navy yard region was Duddington Manor; westward thereof, to and up the Potomac, Duddington Pasture; and thence northward into Georgetown, somewhat overlapping, Scotland Yard, Rome, Layton Stone, the Father's Gift, and the Widow's Mite—excellent names chosen before realtors had debased our taste.¹ The grantee of the two

¹ Maryland Land Records, Annapolis, liber 6, folios 172, 173, 284, 318, 333, 528. Rome, a tract of 400 acres, which in 1663 was granted to Francis Pope and which lay along the south side of the Tiber (named in the grant) did not extend eastward as far as Capitol Hill. It seems to have been a favorite name in the Pope family, for John Pope owned a "Rome" in Worcester County, and another in Talbot County, Md. Before 1670 the "Rome" of the District of Columbia had been regranted under other names.

Duddingtons was George Thompson, a Maryland lawyer, whose father had come over in the *Ark*, the Maryland *Mayflower*. The date of the grant was 1663. Thompson also received a third grant, lying inland on the north side of Duddington Manor. The whole comprised a single tract of some 1800 acres, and lay in what was then Charles County, Md. By the terms of his grants Thompson was obligated to pay at St. Marys, the Maryland capital, to the grantor, Lord Baltimore, yearly, one pound and sixteen shillings, one-half at the feast of the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin Mary, and the other half at the feast of St. Michael, the archangel.² The third grant is thus described in one of the Maryland Land Records, dated December 10, 1663:

"Laid out for George Thompson of this province, Gent., a parcell of Land in Charles County called New Troy, lying in the woods, on the East side of Annacostine River, Beginning at a bounded Oak, the Exteriour bound Tree of Duddington Mannor, bounding on the South with the said Mannor by a Line drawn East from the said Oak for the length of Two hundred perches to a bounded Oak, on the East with a Line drawn North from the said Oak for the length of Four hundred perches to the Land of Capt. Robert Twap [Troop], called Scotland Yard, on the North with the said Land, on the West with Duddingtons pasture, Containing and now laid out for Five hundred Acres more or less."³

From this description it may be seen that New Troy was a rectangular tract twice as long as broad. In terms of much later geography, it was bounded approximately as follows: on the west by a line passing through the

² *Potomac Flats Case, United States vs. M. F. Morris, et al*, VI, 368.

³ Maryland Land Records, Annapolis, liber 6, folios 173-174, Dec. 10, 1663.

eastern boundary of the old Botanic Garden at the foot of the Capitol, on the north by K Street, on the east by a line passing through the center of Stanton Park, and on the south by a line near Providence Hospital. The library site lies south and east of the center of the tract. Thompson obtained New Troy by the assignment of a warrant of Thomas Hussey, gentleman. In 1670 he sold New Troy and the two Duddingtons to Thomas Notley for 40,000 pounds of tobacco and in the following year the three holdings were erected into a manor called Cerne (or Corn) Abbey Manor. In 1679 they were willed to Notley's godson Notley Rozier, whose only child married Daniel Carroll, great uncle, it is said, of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the last of the Signers. Daniel's only son, Charles Jr., inherited the property, from whom the eastern part of it, including New Troy and most of Duddington Manor, passed to his eldest son Daniel Carroll of Duddington, an eminent resident of early Washington. In 1790 when the District of Columbia was created, Daniel was living on his ancestral acres in a farmhouse near the Anacostia River and the town of Carrollsburg, which had been laid out in 1770 at the mouth of James Creek—never much more than a paper town. He was the largest holder of lands within the bounds of the new city. We may conjecture that a road or lane led from his farm-house northward over his plantation into New Troy. Before 1790 near New Jersey Avenue, a few squares south of the Capitol, there was a small dwelling made of logs, and a henhouse, indicating that a part of this region was under cultivation. Quick to discern that his back yard had become his front yard, Carroll erected a commodious residence near New Jersey Avenue on the south side of Capitol Hill, the new designation for Jenkins's Hill, and moved to his new

house about 1792.⁴ This was the first completed improvement on Capitol Hill.

In the original survey and plot of the city, the library site comprised five squares of unequal size. Three of these, numbers 729, 730 and 731, adjoined what is now the Capitol grounds and lay between East Capitol and B Streets and First and Second Streets. Square 729 fronting on East Capitol Street was a square of full size. Squares 730 and 731 were small squares, so made by Pennsylvania Avenue, which originally extended to First Street. These three squares are the site of the Library of Congress (exclusive of the Annex). The other two squares lying east of Second Street, numbers 760 and 761, are the site of the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Annex.

An agreement made by President Washington with the original proprietors of the city provided for an equal division of the lots between the government and the proprietors, after the streets and public squares had been laid out. For its half, the government paid at the rate of \$66.66 an acre, Pennsylvania currency.⁵ In the division of the library site, the government received the whole of square 760 and divided equally with Carroll the

⁴*Ibid.*, folio 174; *Potomac Flats Case*, VI, 370-371, 376, 379-380, 382-383, map opposite p. 388; W. B. Bryan, *History of the National Capital*, I, 51; "Plan of a Part of the City of Washington shewing the Buildings belonging to Mr. Daniel Carroll of Duddington," in Map Division, Library of Congress.

I do not believe that Capitol Hill was so called before 1790. In 1847 George Watterston printed the following statement: "A European . . . who owned a farm near the Capitol, and whose name was Pope . . . called his farm *Rome*, the stream at the bottom of it the *Tiber*, and the hill above, *Capitol Hill*, on which he is said to have predicted, many years before the event took place, that a magnificent edifice would be erected which would be called the Capitol," (*Daily National Intelligencer*, Aug. 26, 1847).

⁵E. F. M. Faeltz and F. W. Pratt, *Washington in Embryo* (1874), pp. 5, 61-63.

remaining four squares. The division was by alternate lots or by areas of equal value. Carroll received five adjoining lots in the southwest part of square 729.

In 1799 Carroll began the construction of a tavern on his most northerly lot, facing First Street. When Congress arrived in Washington in the fall of 1800 the building was completed and Pontius Delare Stelle, lately from Trenton, New Jersey, a "pleasant, genteel, and well balanced man," was installed as tavern keeper. In October of that year Mrs. Margaret Bayard Smith, one of Stelle's early guests, reported that the parlor of the tavern was large and handsome and that her comfortable room had a fire place and was furnished with a neat bed, wash table, tea table, and white Windsor chairs. Tea, which was brought by Charlot, a fine little black girl, included toast, biscuit and ham.⁶ Here, until 1805, Stelle conducted a most popular hostelry, much in demand as a meeting place for dancing assemblies. In the spring of 1802 it was used as a voting place in a city election, and in the following year the District Circuit Court held bankruptcy proceedings in one of its rooms.

Stelle's successor, William R. King, of the navy yard neighborhood, found tavern keeping exceedingly unprofitable, for in 1806 he was confined in the Washington City prison for debt. This year however his tavern had

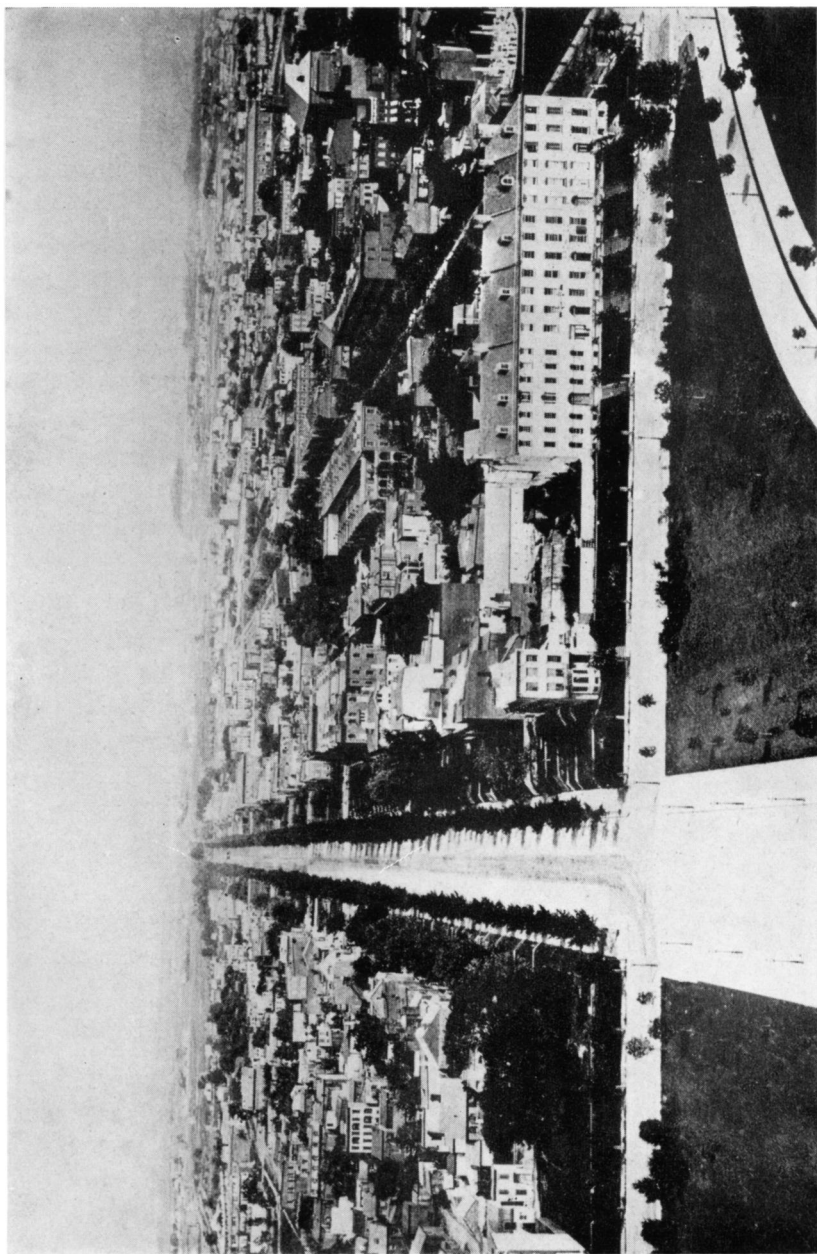
⁶For information about houses and local residents, 1800-1820, see a manuscript volume in the Library of Congress, entitled "Some Materials for a Life of Elias Boudinot Caldwell, with Observations on the Early History of Capitol Hill" (1933) and compiled by D. C. Mearns and V. W. Clapp. I have made an extensive use of the sources there listed. For references the reader is referred to this volume.

In addition to Stelle's tavern there were in 1801 in the neighborhood of the Capitol six or seven other taverns or boarding houses, and eight small shops occupied respectively by a tailor, a shoemaker, a printer, a washer woman, a grocer, a stationer, a dry goods dealer, and an oyster vender. The charge at one of the boarding houses was \$15 a week, including lodging, board, attendance, wood, candles, and liquors. (W. C. Bruce, *John Randolph of Roanoke*, I, 554, 558)

at least one distinguished guest, St. Mémin, the French painter of miniatures. After a considerable period of vacancy and unsuccessful tenure, Nicholas L. Queen, in 1816, opened up Queen's Tavern "in the range of buildings commonly called Carroll's Long Row." He advertised that he was "prepared to entertain travelers and others in a comfortable style. His beds and other furniture were entirely new, his provisions and liquors the best the markets afford, his stables newly fitted up were ample and well supplied with forage and grain, and his hostlers sober and attentive. A repast or collation for an individual or small parties could be provided at any time on the shortest notice. A few members of Congress could be accommodated with board, unconnected with the public house."⁷

Carroll's Long Row, extending from a point near the center of the square to A Street, consisted of five houses, three stories high, with dormer windows in the roof. They were some ten feet above the level of First Street, with steps leading from each house to the street. The tavern, or most northerly house, was much the largest, having on the west side 21 windows, seven in each story. The house next to it had twelve windows; and each of the last three, nine. In December, 1810, Dr. Thomas Ewell opened an "extensive apothecary shop" in the corner house, in which he resided. Later he added a line of paints, dyes, oils, and wines. The next occupant of the house was his brother, Dr. James Ewell, a leading Capitol Hill physician, whose practice however was for a time interrupted by confinement in the debtor's prison. There are sketches of the two brothers in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. In the winter of 1816-1817, in one

⁷ *National Intelligencer*, Jan. 5, 1816.



VIEW FROM THE CAPITOL LOOKING DOWN EAST CAPITOL STREET. CARROLL ROW ON THE RIGHT. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH
IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, MADE BY HANDY ABOUT 1880

of the houses between Ewell's and the tavern, lodged Senator Jeremiah Mason and Representative and Mrs. Daniel Webster, all of New Hampshire.⁸

As early as December, 1801, William Emack had a store at the southeast corner of East Capitol and First Streets or northwest corner of the library site, where were to be found, according to an advertisement, "soft shelled almonds, China oranges, lemons, figs and raisins, with almost every article in the grocery line—Also a neat assortment of dry goods suitable for the present season, and a quantity of double flint glass, Liverpool, and stone wares." In 1813 the Capitol Hill market was opened in the center of East Capitol Street, between First and Second Streets.⁹

In 1800 Elias Boudinot Caldwell, a young New Jersey lawyer, was appointed clerk of the Supreme Court and moved to the capital. Enterprising, devout, full of good works, whether commercial, educational, or religious, ready at all times to make an honest dollar or to champion a worthy cause, Caldwell for a quarter of a century was one of the leading citizens of the embryo city. In 1808-1809 he bought five unimproved lots on the southwest corner of square 761, fronting on B Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Second Street, at an average cost of \$154 a lot. Soon after this purchase, he erected on lot number 5 a commodious double house, two and a half stories high, in which he lived until his death in 1825. It was the first substantial improvement in the square. Since 1893 when Caldwell's granddaughter published an article stating that her grandfather's house after the burning of the Capitol in 1814 was used temporarily as the home of the Supreme

⁸ *Memoirs and Correspondence of Jeremiah Mason* (1873), p. 145.

⁹ *National Intelligencer*, Dec. 28, 1801; W. B. Bryan, *History of the National Capital*, I, 487.

Court, the Caldwell house has received considerable notoriety as an historical mansion. It is now known that the granddaughter was mistaken and that the temporary home of the court was south of the Capitol on the southwest corner of New Jersey Avenue and B Street in a tall brick house owned by Daniel Carroll. The credit for exploding the Caldwell legend must be awarded to two assistants in the Reading Room of the Library of Congress, Messrs. Mearns and Clapp, who anticipated my findings by some six months. During the British invasion of the District of Columbia in 1814 Caldwell was a captain of Light Horse and on the retreat of the invaders was for a time the ranking army officer in the city.

In plain view of the east front of the Capitol, the library site has witnessed many memorable events, inaugural and otherwise. By all odds the most exciting happening in its history occurred during the twenty-four hours between the evening of August 24 and that of August 25, 1814. Most Washingtonians had pressing engagements in the neighboring states of Maryland and Virginia and were not present. Dr. James Ewell was an eye witness. His residence, as we have seen, was the corner house, First and A Street, not far from the present fountain. He is the author of the most detailed account that we have of the occupation of the city by the British. In 1814 it was published as an appendix of the third edition of his handbook, the *Medical Companion*, under the sub-title "Bilious Fever." Regarded by its critics as too favorable to the enemy, it was reviewed satirically in a pamphlet entitled *Eulogium on The Capture of Washington or Bilious Fever*, by one who used the pseudonym of Julius Scaliger, M.D.

On the approach of the British, Ewell with his family sought refuge in the house of a neighbor, Mrs. Orr, who

lived diagonally across on First Street between A and B Street in what is now the Capitol grounds. Returning to his residence after the Capitol had been set on fire, he was introduced to Rear Admiral George Cockburn, second in command of the British, the first in command being Major General Robert Ross. What followed is best told in his own words:¹⁰

"In the mean time, general Ross came up, to whom I was also introduced. He had just come in time to infer from what admiral Cockburn had said, that my house had been robbed. In a tone that will for ever endear him to me as a '*perfect gentleman*' indeed, he observed he was *very sorry* to hear that my house had been disturbed, and begged that I would tell him which it was, and he would order a sentinel to guard it. We were then standing before my door, the south end of Carroll's row, facing the capital.

" 'This is my house, sir,' said I.

"With an amiable embarrassment he replied, 'Why, sir, this is the house we had pitched on for our headquarters.'

"I told him, 'I was glad of it, and regretted that he had not taken it earlier, as my property would then have been protected.'

"He observed, 'he could never think of trespassing on the repose of a private family, and would order his baggage out of my house immediately.'

¹⁰ James Ewell, *Medical Companion* (1816), pp. 638-639, 642, 646.

Henry Adams says that neither Ross nor Cockburn alleged the destruction of the Canadian capital by the Americans as their warranty for destroying Washington, but they burned it "because they thought it proper, as they would have burned a negro Kraal or a den of pirates" (H. Adams, *History of the United States*, VIII, 146-147). Adams evidently did not read Ewell's account, which says that, on being introduced to Mrs. Ewell, Ross "shook her hand with every mark of undissembled friendship, expressed his deep regret to learn that she had been so seriously frightened, and lamented sincerely the necessity that had given cause to these tragedies, namely the burning of the British capital in Canada" (*Medical Companion*, p. 641). Thus are the purple passages of the historians canceled by evidence that they do not read.

"I earnestly begged he would still consider it as his headquarters.

" 'Well, sir,' said he, 'since you are so good as to insist on my staying at your house, I consent; but I will endeavour to give you as little trouble as possible. Any apartment under your roof will suffice me.'

"I asked him to accompany me, and I would show him a room. He assented, and I conducted him to my own bed-chamber, which was the best furnished in my house, with an uncommonly large mattress on the bed. He refused for some time to accept of it, and insisted I should go and bring Mrs. Ewell home; observing, that I might depend on it my family should be just as safe as they were the evening before, when the American army was here; for, continued he, '*I am myself a married man—have several sweet children—and venerate the sanctities of the conjugal and domestic relations.*' . . .¹¹

"On my observing to general Ross, that it was a great pity the elegant library had been burnt with the capital, he replied with much concern, 'I lament most sincerely I was not apprized of the circumstance, for had I known it in time, the books would most certainly have been saved.'

" 'Neither do I suppose, general,' said I, 'you would have burnt the president's house, had Mrs. Madison remained at home.'

" 'No, sir,' replied he, 'I make war neither against Letters nor Ladies; and I have heard so much in praise of Mrs. Madison, that I would rather protect, than burn a house which sheltered such an excellent lady.' . . .

"There was another case in which I had the satisfaction to save the property of a valuable citizen. As I was standing on the pavement near my door, which, as I said, the general and admiral had used as headquarters, a British officer observed, in my presence, "*Well, we shall be done with burning* when the ropewalks are burnt, and that handsome building yonder,' pointing at the house of my pious and worthy neighbour, Elias B. Caldwell, Esq.

¹¹ The rest of the extract relates to the morning of August 25.

“ ‘Why certainly you are not going to burn that house, captain,’ said I. ‘Yes, sir,’ replied he, ‘we shall.’ ‘It is not public property,’ I said. ‘No matter for that, there is public property at the house,’ alluding to some cartridges and cartridge-boxes, which had been left there; ‘and, besides,’ continued he, ‘it belongs to a man who has been very active against us.’

“ ‘It is true,’ replied I, ‘Mr. Caldwell is captain of a volunteer company, and a brave man. But brave men do not bear malice against each other for doing their duty; on the contrary, respect them the more for it, as general Ross, yesterday, did commodore Barney. And therefore, I hope, that as this house is private property, it will not be destroyed.’ He paused for a moment—then went to general Ross, who, I suppose, put a stop to it, for the house was not burnt.”

On August 25 when the British were destroying the gunpowder at Greenleaf Point, now the location of the Army War College, an accidental explosion killed or wounded more than seventy-five of the invaders. The injured survivors were transported to Carroll Row and lodged in the house adjoining Ewell's, which was converted into a hospital and placed under the direction of Ewell. Contiguous to this house, on the north side, was the general hospital for the American sick and wounded, which was in charge of a young American surgeon, eighteen years old, who had studied medicine for only a few months and who scarcely knew how to put up the simplest prescription.

Between the close of the War of 1812 and the beginning of the Civil War, some improvements were made on the library site, with the exception of square 760, the government reservation, which remained vacant. On square 730 there was a blacksmith shop and on square 731 a hay scale. On square 729 at the corner of East Capitol and

First Street there was a three-story brick house, with a shop on the ground floor. Above the shop lived a stone-cutter and nearby was his marble yard. He earned a living by making cenotaphs for the Congressional Cemetery, where his grotesque product, memorials of statesmen dying in office, may still be seen. In 1839 Duff Green, noted politician and journalist, purchased Carroll Row, thereafter often called Duff Green Row.¹² He lived in the Ewell house. For a time Robert C. Winthrop of Massachusetts, speaker of the House of Representatives, lived in the row, as did also Senator Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania. In the 'forties the third house north of Ewell's was occupied by Mrs. Benjamin Sprigg, boarding house keeper. Among her boarders were Nathan Sargent (or Oliver Oldschool), journalist; Edward F. French, the father of Mrs. Daniel Chester French; Dr. Samuel C. Busey, well-known Washington physician; Representative Joshua R. Giddings of Ohio, anti-slavery leader; and Representative and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln, with their son Robert. The landlady seated her guests at a long table over which she presided. Dr. Busey recalls that Lincoln often amused the boarders with anecdotes, first laying down his knife and fork, placing his elbows upon the table, resting his face between his hands, and beginning with "that reminds me."¹³

During the Civil War, Carroll Row was used as an annex to the Old Capitol Prison at the corner of First and A Street, N.E., at first for the housing of contraband slaves, but later for offenders of various kinds.

¹² James Croggon, "Old Washington, Supplement," Carnegie Public Library, Washington, D. C., pp., 9, 11. There is an excellent account of Green in the new *Dictionary of American Biography*.

¹³ C. O. Paullin, "Abraham Lincoln in Congress, 1847-1849," in *Ill. State Hist. Soc. Jour.*, XIV, 85-86; Allen C. Clark, "Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital," in *Recds. of Columbia Hist. Soc.*, 27, pp. 1-174; S. C. Busey, *Personal Reminiscences and Recollections*, pp. 25-28.

Twice Belle Boyd, the notorious Confederate spy, was confined here. A few extracts from her book "Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison" (1865) may be quoted:¹⁴

"This large unpretending brick building, situate near the Old Capitol, was formerly used as a hotel. . . . It had been converted into a receptacle for rebels, prisoners of state, hostages, blockade-runners, smugglers, desperadoes, spies, criminals under sentence of death, and, lastly, a large number of Federal officers convicted of defrauding the government. . . . I was conducted to what was termed the 'room for distinguished guests' . . . In this apartment had been held, though not for a long period of time, Miss Antonia F., Nannie T., with her aged mother, and many other ladies belonging to our best families in the South. . . . Among the gentlemen who were retained as prisoners at the Carroll was Mr. Smithson,¹⁵ formerly one of the wealthiest bankers in Washington City . . . sentenced to five years in the Penitentiary at hard labour."

Several persons arrested for conspiring to assassinate President Lincoln, including Mrs. Surratt, were confined in Carroll Row. After the war a syndicate composed of ex-Senator A. H. Cragin of New Hampshire and others purchased the row. John Fisk, a New York speculator, at the time of his death in 1872 was considering the erection of a magnificent hotel on the site.¹⁶ At No. 129 East Capitol Street on the library site between First and Second Street lived Nathan Sargent, sergeant of arms of the House of Representatives, commissioner of customs, and member of the Levy Court of the County of Washington. He died there in 1875. There is a sketch of him in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

¹⁴ Volume I, pp. 262-263, 264, 282.

¹⁵ William T. Smithson, whose place of business was at 544 Seventh Street.

¹⁶ *Washington Evening Star*, Nov. 20, 1886.

At No. 137 lived Major Benjamin B. French, of New Hampshire extraction, who had come to Washington in the 'thirties, and had made his mark as a public man. He was commissioner of public buildings for several years, chief marshal of the inaugural parade, 1861, and chairman of the inaugural ball committee, 1865. As a friend of Lincoln, he accompanied the President to Gettysburg and at the exercises read an original poem, which is regarded as not unworthy of the occasion. In 1841 he purchased lot 25 in square 729 and built the residence in which he lived until his death in 1870. He was the uncle of Daniel Chester French, sculptor of the Lincoln statue in the Lincoln Memorial, and also of Mrs. Mary French, the widow of the sculptor, still living, and once familiarly known as Miss Mamie French of Capitol Hill. In her *Memories of a Sculptor's Wife* she has given an intimate account of her uncle's home, which was near the northeast corner of the Library of Congress grounds. From this I have made an extract³⁷:

"But the spot where the trees always seemed most beautiful to me was my Uncle Major's house on East Capitol Street. It was a large brick house standing back from the street, with rooms upon either side of the hall, and surrounded by old-fashioned grounds. These grounds, while in no way magnificent, were quaint in the accepted Colonial style. There was a long grape arbor; there were walks with box hedges leading to the summer house and the croquet ground; there was a sundial, and what to us seemed like a fairy creation, a fountain, tier after tier of dripping water, and at times a plank leading in from the outer edge to the lower basin, a most fascinating bridge which we children were forbidden to cross. . . .

"On a small lawn in a jog at the back of the house was a wrought-iron table with a marble top and six wrought-

³⁷ Pages 33-42.

iron chairs, the former of which stands at present in our garden at 'Chesterwood,' [Massachusetts]. But the thing which we all loved best was the great magnolia tree—*Magnolia grandiflora*—which is usually seen in its glory only in the South. This particular tree, however, though there were others in the garden, was by far the most luscious and perfect example of its kind in Washington. . . . For years after the Library of Congress was built, this great magnolia tree stood in the Library grounds; but so much building in its vicinity was probably bad for it, and a few years ago it disappeared. . . .

"I loved the house dearly. . . . The parlor was especially beautiful; a long room with two fireplaces, a soft grey paper sparsely dotted with tiny gold medallions and floating ribbons, and with what we called 'vanishing' mirrors, between the windows at each end, and resplendent with red damask. This damask had come from the Supreme Court. . . . All the chairs and ottomans were covered with the damask, and two rosewood sofas. . . .

"Over the door of the library, across the hall, hung, during my childhood, the long clay pipe with which my aunt, when a little girl, had been presented by Andrew Jackson for the purpose of blowing soap bubbles, but I am quite sure it was never used except as a decoration.

"My uncle must have been a very interesting personage—very much beloved. . . . He cared little about positions of great responsibility. 'They talk,' he writes upon one occasion, 'of making me Attorney-General. I don't want to be Attorney-General. I want to be Marshal.' He liked to ride a horse, like a child to be in the midst of things. . . . As I remember him, he always seemed to me a jolly, plump 'Colonel Newcome.' He was tender-hearted, impetuous, violent of speech, with a violence at which we children smiled because it was so frankly of a surface nature. He was pleased by the most trivial attentions; he was moved by the most barefaced tale of distress.

"He was greatly given to swearing, as were many of the men of that period. . . . He would say of his most dignified first wife, 'Betsy told me she'd be damned if she'd do any such thing,' and then, when he realized how he was

misquoting her, he would laugh and add, 'Wasn't that the way you expressed it, Betsy dear?' . . .

"One of the things that I associate with my uncle's place are the clothes that people wore. I was very fond of clothes, and, quite naturally, croquet being the fashionable game, the young people wore their prettiest gowns upon the croquet ground. Every one had croquet greens of their own, but by far the most attractive in that part of town was the one in the old garden at my uncle's place. All the young people of the family and the neighborhood congregated there. It was a secluded oblong of green sward, two sides shut in by trellises and close-clipped trees, one side open to the fountain and box-bordered hedges, and at the end towards the front, the fascinating summer house, vine-covered, a screaming eagle at the top, a marble table and iron chairs inside, where my uncle, shaded from the blazing sun, loved to sit and write. . . .

"When I was about ten years old, this dear uncle died, and I must have grieved for him, his death must have been a great loss in my life, but the thing that I remember best about it was the magnificence of his funeral—the greatest, I have been told, except Lincoln's, that was ever held in Washington. He was very high up as a Grand Master Mason—the thirty-third degree—besides being a public man. My mind is a jumble of bands and soldiers and police and regalia, of crowds in front of the house, and surging crowds in the streets. All Capitol Hill, I believe, and a large part of Washington turned out.

"The scene must have been impressive, aside from the fact that I was but ten years old, an impressionable age. The ceremonies at the house and at the church over, we did not reach the cemetery until seven o'clock. From the entrance to the grave, a distance of perhaps two city blocks, was a line of Masons, three deep, their heads uncovered, their great plumed hats in their hands, their orders, their swords unsheathed, and at the far end a group of people standing about the open grave with bowed heads, the whole scene lighted by candlelight."

The sculptor of Lincoln was often a visitor at his uncle's house, which after the death of his uncle was occupied by the widow, his aunt, and later by his father, Henry Flagg French, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Hayes, Garfield, and Arthur. There is still another connection between Lincoln and the library site. For a time John G. Nicolay, one of the biographers of Lincoln, lived in a house on the present site of the Folger Shakespeare Library. In 1879 he purchased a residence with ample grounds at 212 B Street, facing Pennsylvania Avenue, a site now forming part of that of the Library Annex, and lived there until he died. His library was the central storehouse of materials for the Nicolay and Hay *Lincoln*, and here he held frequent consultations with Mr. Hay, whose last visit was on September 18, 1901, a few days before Nicolay's death. Here also lived his daughter, Miss Helen Nicolay, the accomplished author of many biographies, including a *Life of Lincoln*.

The first legislation respecting a new building for the Library of Congress is found in the sundry civil appropriation act of March 3, 1873, authorizing the expenditure of \$5,000 for a plan and creating a commission, consisting of the joint committee on the library, the chairman of the committee on public buildings and grounds of the Senate, and the librarian of Congress. It was authorized to select a plan and site. These were matters of much difference of opinion. In 1886, more than thirteen years later, Congress made its first appropriation for the construction of a building, and authorized a commission consisting of the secretary of the interior, the architect of the capital extension, and the librarian of Congress to choose a site between First and Second Street, either on the south or the north side of East Capitol Street, and to

make contracts for a building. The commission preferred the more southerly site, which it bought at a cost of \$585,000.¹⁸ The buildings on this site were torn down in the winter of 1886-1887, six men being injured when the north wall of Carroll Row fell unexpectedly.¹⁹ The new building was completed and occupied in 1897.

During the Civil War, square 760, upon the northern part of which now stands the Folger Shakespeare Library, was used by the government for war purposes. Soon after the close of the war it sold the square to Capt. Albert Grant, a Milwaukee architect, who served in the Union army during the war, enduring confinement in eleven Confederate prisons and once narrowly escaping from the gallows erected for his execution. In 1870 he completed the construction of a row of sixteen buildings facing A Street and in the following year a row of fourteen buildings facing East Capitol Street, first known as Grant's Capitol Block and later as Grant Row,²⁰ and after the financial failure of Grant, sometimes as Grant's Folly. The row was the most costly and elaborate ever erected east of the Capitol. At the time of its construction it was supposed that this region would become one of the finest residential sections of the city. It is said that the British minister wished to rent the two middle houses for the British legation, which were larger than the rest, and asked Grant if he would cut doors in the partition between them. Grant replied, "No, one of these houses is big enough for anybody." The minister later negotiated to buy the two houses, but \$75,000 was the lowest price asked for them, and no sale was made. Grant's fortune was wrecked by the debt incurred in the construc-

¹⁸ *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XVII, 513; XXIV, 12-14, 348.

¹⁹ *Washington Evening Star*, Dec. 15, 1886.

²⁰ *Grant's Letter to the Governor* (1871).

tion of the row. He borrowed a large sum from the Phoenix Life Insurance Company, which finally took over the property. In 1906 it sold the seven houses next to Third Street to James O'Donnell. Among the many persons who have resided in the row, are Gen. Charles Ewing (a brother-in-law of Gen. W. T. Sherman), Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire, and Senator James K. Kelly of Oregon. In 1928 the row was acquired by Henry C. Folger, it is reported at a cost of more than \$300,000. On its site is the Folger Shakespeare Library, which was opened in 1932.²¹

The Folger Shakespeare Library occupies about one half of square 760. At 216 A Street, on the other half, for several years lived Mr. Lawrence Washington, an assistant in the Library of Congress, and the last Washington of the masculine sex born at Mount Vernon. At a boarding house on the northeast corner of A and Second Street lodged Representative Champ Clark, 1907-1908, later speaker of the House. Among the messmates here a few years earlier were Dr. Waldo G. Leland, Prof. Claude H. Van Tyne, Dr. William Adams Slade, and Hon. Alfred H. Stone, all noted scholars. The chief building on square 761 was the Lutheran Church of the Reformation, facing B Street. It dates from 1881. In 1903 the International Reform Bureau purchased from Mrs. Ellen Beale Greene and other members of the Beale family the Caldwell house, 206 Pennsylvania Avenue, paying three dollars a square foot for it. Accepting the seemingly well-authenticated statement that the Supreme Court had met there after the War of 1812, Dr. Wilbur F. Crafts, superintendent of the bureau, identified the front room on the ground floor as the meeting place of the court. To this he gave the name "Christ Room" and

²¹ Washington *Evening Star*, Feb. 11, 1906; March 31, 1928.

said that only masterpieces portraying the life of Christ should be hung there.²²

In 1928 Congress authorized the construction of the Library Annex on square 761 and the remaining part of square 760. The land and improvements were obtained at a cost of \$921,202. For the Church of the Reformation the government paid \$103,700, and for the Reform Bureau, \$98,900, the largest sums expended for single holdings. The Annex, which is now under construction, was planned to cost \$6,500,000. In 1935 Congress increased this sum by the addition of \$2,866,340.²³

In conclusion, I have a few acknowledgments to make. The desirability of a paper on the history of the library site was suggested to me by Dr. Victor S. Clark, consultant in the Library of Congress. The pleasure of the hunt has been mine. For many years I have been domiciled in the library engaged in tracing the historical fact to its secret hiding place and bringing it out into greater light. I can never repay the debt I owe this institution. I can only acknowledge it.

²² *Twentieth Century Progress*, Washington, D. C., May, 1928, vol. 28, no. 3, p. 9.

²³ *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XLV, 622-23, XLVI, 583-584; XLVII, 17; *Report of The Librarian of Congress*, 1935, p. 2.